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SCHULTZ'S OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY.¹

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Dr. Schultz is a noted German scholar, who is held in high esteem, both by conservative and radical biblical students. It is thought by many that he has succeeded in discovering the golden mean between the extremists in Old Testament discussions.

We deal with the first two of the twenty chapters of this remarkable book.

"Biblical Theology" is a much misunderstood term. Biblical theology, properly understood, presents the facts of revealed religion, just as they existed in the different periods of its growth. Hence the task of biblical theology is purely historical. In searching the books of Holy Scripture for these facts of biblical theology, we do not assume that the religious and moral material of the Bible is all of equal excellence. We assume nothing. These questions are to be answered by a careful investigation of the facts.

Biblical theology is, of course, closely connected with exegesis. We must know exactly what a biblical book means, in order to get its contribution to biblical theology. To do this in a way to win the assent of all is impossible at present, because there is not entire agreement as to the date, and authorship, and structure of the biblical writings. Indeed, the debatable ground has rather been widened by the very latest investigations.

Biblical theology is also connected with systematic theology. Systematic theology has not enough recognized that

¹ *Old Testament Theology*. By Dr. Hermann Schultz. Translated by Rev. J. A. Patterson. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. New York: Scribners. 2 Vols. Price \$6.00 net.

there has been progress in revelation. Systematic theology aims to present, as a harmonious whole, the religious teachings of Old Testament, New Testament and the Christian church. Biblical theology makes no effort to harmonize truths. It simply presents the moral and religious life of a period as it was at that time. It by no means asserts that every religious teaching of the Old Testament is a harmonious part of Christian doctrine. The religious life and teaching of David's time, for example, was but a step in the process of religious development, which at last would lead to a perfect religion, Christianity. The most that can be said is, that in each period the germ of Christianity was present. But it was hid, and it was only in germ. As a matter of fact no Old Testament conception is entirely Christian. Christianity must set every one of them in a new light, and perfect them. And it is sad to see men try to make out that such men as Jacob and David lived up to the standard of morality which Christ taught. And it is sadder yet to lower the Christian standard, so as to make Jacob appear in a better light.

Biblical theology has nothing to do with church history. We see in Jesus the Messiah. He lived the perfect life. The church has not reached his standard, much less passed on beyond it. The result is that the best church and Christian life is but the unfolding of the life of Christ in the believer. The Bible is not merely the beginning of Christian literature. It is the classical standard of such literature for all time.

But biblical theology has much to do with the history of Israel, especially with the religious history of Israel. Indeed, the religious history of Israel is the important part of her history, because Israel was *the* religious people. Biblical theology is also connected with archæology, because that science has to do, not only with Israel's domestic, social, and legal relations, but also with morals and worship.

Biblical theology is therefore entitled to a place by itself in the separate departments of theology. In it the student arrives at definite results. It clears the way for systematic theology, by showing exactly what sort of thing primitive Christianity was

This service helps us also to test the church methods and doctrines of every and any period.

Accordingly we must proceed to ascertain precisely what the moral and religious principles of Israel were at the different periods of her history. To get the facts there must be, first of all, a careful sifting of documents, with reference to the time in which they were written. We must apply purely historical tests, unmoved by prejudices of any kind. Yet it is useless to study Israel's history, except one is in living sympathy with the spirit of her religion.

The sources for the study of biblical theology are the books of Holy Scripture and only those. These books we may appeal to, as giving us an account of the real religious history of Israel, and not merely its outer shell. Some writers, indeed, believe that the leaders of Israel had a secret and deeper religion, not known to the people, and not recorded in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, however, such men as Isaiah and the Deuteronomist, who must have been of the "initiated," if there were a secret faith, preach precisely the same religion as the rest, and that with simplicity and candor. The idea that the leaders of Israel had an esoteric religion, is a mere phantom of the imagination.

It may be that these writers accommodated themselves to popular views, in a measure. This is not strange. Symbol and parable are in constant use, except in the language of science. But the religious zeal of these men makes it certain that, after all, they meant to express to the people their own deepest convictions. The Old Testament records are, then, the real records of the best and richest religious experience of the nation.

The biblical writings include every form of literature used by the Hebrews. There is not much, however, of the philosophical element. The language usually is popular, even in the law and prophets. Ecclesiastes, however, is philosophical. It is easy to trace the development of revealed religion in the historical, legal, and prophetic sections. But it is more difficult to do this in the pieces which are poetical. Some of the poetry is really secular, as Canticles, and it requires keen spiritual insight to

detect the religious element in this book. It is difficult, also, in the "vision" and "symbol" and "parable" always to discriminate accurately between the mere form and the real meaning. In fact, only the man who has an instinct for poetical expression will avoid innumerable blunders.

Biblical theology finds even more difficulty with the historical books, because we cannot be sure that they are of equal historical credibility. The most devout and spiritual writer cannot be scientifically accurate as a historian if he is far separated from the events he describes, and has no trustworthy documents to draw from. If he is hundreds of years from the events he narrates he may give an accurate description of the general condition of such times, but he cannot give a detailed account of the religious coloring of those ages, and that is precisely what biblical theology most requires. Kings and Judges are, therefore, trustworthy records of the times of which they treat, and while Chronicles are not useful for an enquiry into the religion of David's time, they are very valuable for understanding the state of religion at the close of the Persian period. Hence a book is not less valuable by not being a strictly accurate narrative of a given period. It may be invaluable as throwing light, incidentally, upon the customs of the time in which it was written.

Here we are confronted with the question: Are there legends and myths in the Bible? And before we give a hasty denial, we should define legend and myth. First, as to legend. When a nation emerges from prehistoric times it always brings with it, as a precious spiritual treasure, the national legend concerning its origin and ancestry, and first deeds. History, strictly so called, is unknown and unnecessary at such early epochs. These things are handed down in song, and proverb, and story. It must be that when the memory of a period is transmitted orally, these traditions should wreath around the early heroes garlands of spontaneous poetry. But this is very far from being fiction or falsehood, even though it is not sober, scientific history. Legend always has history as a kernel, and in legend the chief figures are always types, models of the nation's character. Thus the

legend lets us into the innermost heart of a nation. In legend one sits by the hearth in a people's home, and listens to the very breathing of its inner life.

Did Israel have legends? Necessarily so. Have some of them been preserved in the Scriptures? Either that, or history has been miraculously revealed to the writers. Is this natural? How could genuine piety help a man to a special knowledge of historical facts? Certainly it does not do so now. And if facts were thus miraculously revealed, what was the use of original documents, and the testimony of eye witnesses, on which biblical writers lay such emphasis?

Really this idea is due to the notion that a legend is not a fit vehicle to convey religious truth. But is this a fact? Certainly an exact history is not, thereby, a suitable medium for the revelation of God's will. Josephus and Tacitus are not to be put into the canon, because they give an accurate account of Jews or Christians. Why is a book put into the canon? Because it places us in contact with the growth of revealed religion. The Holy Spirit excludes deceit and lying, but he does not require a method of writing history which is unknown to the people of the time. The ancient world cared little for exact details, but everything for the great principles exemplified in the history. And the Holy Spirit does not exclude ignorance of petty details. This same Spirit used Luther, though he was not the equal of Humboldt in scientific knowledge. He used Augustine though he was not the equal of Sallust as an historian. The historical instinct is not the highest gift. It did not teach Tacitus the ways of God. It is the spirit of revelation which illumines the religious life, and gives consciousness of the will of God, that is most to be desired.

Now the dominant ideas of a people express themselves in their legends; and these legends are due to the really creative minds within that people. Hence the legends of Israel must have been shaped by the Spirit of God working in Israel's men. The religious leaders of Israel were also the men who produced and gave form to its legends. Really the Spirit of God can speak through legend better than through history. The legend

reveals Israel as it actually was. It shows her model characters. For giving us a knowledge of the religion of the age out of which it springs, legend is the most valuable material we possess.

Legend has to do with history, myth has to do with doctrine—with thoughts about the essence of the world we behold.

The proper time for forming myths is when languages are growing. Myth and language arise together. Myths are usually closely connected with legends, and come out of remote antiquity. It is plain that Israel was not poorer than her neighbors in the possession of myths, which are, indeed, among the noblest possessions of early peoples, and there is no reason why some of these myths may not have been preserved in the Bible. Israel took up the common mythical ideas concerning the origin of earth and man and saturated them with true and enduring beliefs concerning God, the world and man. It was only when Israel ceased to grow, that she ceased to appropriate and utilize the myth.

When Israel took up these myths, she at once reproduced them from within and purified them, making them to be revelation myths. The earlier myths of the Persians and Chaldeans are very similar to the early Bible stories. But in religious character, they are as different as the Chaldean and Jewish religions. In the Old Testament the myth is "born again by the creative power of a self-revealing God." (*Riehm*).

This revelation myth is the most appropriate of all dresses in which to present the true religion. It speaks straight to the heart. For the deepest intellect it is deep. For the child it is winning and simple. It is the brightest gem in the Old Testament. It is plain that the narratives of the times before Moses are legendary. This is clear from the fact that it is a time prior to all knowledge of writing in Israel, when, indeed, writing was only beginning to come into use in Egypt. It is also plain that these narratives are legendary from the superhuman proportions assigned to time and power, and the easy tolerance of contradiction. These early narratives in Genesis are perfectly natural as legends, but as history they are very perplexing and inconceivable.

The first three chapters of Genesis have become revelation myths. The stories about creation, the primeval condition of man, and the fall are myths, that is, the religious ideas only remain in the narrative. This is best shown by those expositors who accept the narratives as history, and yet do not succeed in getting out of them any other meaning than the advocates of the mythical view.

The result may be outlined as follows : Genesis is a book of sacred legend with a mythical introduction. From Abraham to Moses we have national legend, mixed with a variety of mythical elements. From Moses to David we have history, still mixed with a great deal of the legendary, and even partly with mythical elements. From David onwards we have history with no more legendary elements in it than are everywhere present in history written by the ancients.